

Tally mark activities



1 Count and show — collections of 6 to 10

Give students collections of 6 to 10 objects. They count, say how many, then show that amount with tally marks — using icy pole sticks, one for each object. Check by counting both the objects and the sticks.

“Count your collection. Say how many. Then show it with tally marks — one icy pole stick for each object.”

“Count your sticks. Does the number of sticks match the number of objects?”

“If someone else looked at your sticks — could they tell how many without counting every one?”

2 Read other people’s icy pole sticks — how many?

Show sets of icy pole stick tally marks that other students laid out — 6 to 10 sticks each. Students read them and say how many. Notice how long it takes.

“Here are some tally marks made with icy pole sticks. How many? Take a moment — count them.”

“Would it be quicker to count seven sticks or three? Why?”

“Is there something about the way the sticks are arranged that makes them easier or harder to count?”

3 The collection changes — update the tally

Students show a collection of seven with icy pole stick tally marks. Then add two more objects and ask how the tally should change.

“We had seven — you laid out seven sticks. Now there are two more. How should your tally change?”

“Did you start again from zero — or did you just add two more sticks?”

4 Non-example: sticks laid out during counting

Lay out an icy pole stick for each object at the same time as you count a group of eight. Touch one object twice but lay only one stick, so the tally ends up wrong.

“I counted and laid out sticks at the same time. My sticks say eight — but there are only seven objects. What happened?”

“If I had counted everything first and then laid out the sticks — could this mistake have happened? Why not?”